



# **The Privatization of Ontario's Education System: 1995-2001**

**OFL Education Is A Right Task Force  
Report On Publicly-Funded Education  
in Ontario**

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### **On Publicly-Funded Education in Ontario**

#### **Summary**

In July 1995, Tory Minister of Education John Snobelen publicly stated his intention to "invent a crisis" in Ontario's education system. The government of Mike Harris has spent the past six years creating that crisis, by systematically dismantling the publicly-funded education system piece by piece. It has undermined and under-funded education at every level, and set the conditions in place for the system to fail.

The government has starved school boards into contracting out of services and other forms of corporate involvement. It has caused chaos in the system through its funding formula and school board restructuring, not to mention the hasty and under-resourced new curriculum, standardized tests and new report cards. It has wreaked havoc with the post-secondary system through chronic under-funding, the deregulation of tuition fees, and the introduction of private universities. It has consistently hammered education workers throughout the system, causing an all-time low in staff morale and an all-time high in labour unrest.

The agenda of the Harris Tories is clear. That agenda is to increasingly privatize the education system in Ontario and open it up to profit-making opportunities for their corporate friends. The privatization agenda became clear when the Tories passed legislation last spring giving tax breaks to parents who send their children to private

schools. Although at this time the full impact of the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS) and other international trade agreements on education is unclear, these agreements will most certainly serve to further entrench that privatization.

In the elementary and secondary systems, the key element in the Tories' plans centered around weakening the power of both the unions that represent education workers, and the local school boards. In their first year in government, the Tories commissioned the *Paroian Report* and the *Crombie Report*, which between them recommended dismantling teacher bargaining and removing the right of teachers to strike; limiting the power of school boards; mandating the contracting out of non-teaching jobs; removing the power of school boards to tax; and centralizing control of education funding in the hands of the provincial government.

In April and September of the following year, the Tories began to implement these recommendations with the passage of Bills 104 and 160. These pieces of legislation provided for the amalgamation of the school boards, the centralization of power at Queen's Park, and the restriction of teacher bargaining rights. Bill 160 also introduced a new funding formula that would allow the government to squeeze billions of dollars out of the system.

As delegates arrived at the OFL's 1999 Biennial Convention, a confidential Cabinet document was leaked, which showed that the Harris Tories were planning to cut a further \$800 million out of an already impoverished publicly-funded education system. Delegates at that convention passed Emergency Resolution #6, which called for the OFL to:

*"...demand that the Ontario government drop the proposal to further reduce funding to elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education; ...convene an Education Is A Right Task Force of affiliates and others such as parents and students; ...support education affiliates as they fight government cuts in negotiations with school boards, Council of Regents, and universities; ...and in conjunction with affiliates, organize protest actions across the province in defense of public education."*

In the spring of 2000, the OFL *Education Is A Right Task Force* was established. Member organizations are CUPE, ETFO, OECTA, OPSEU, OSSTF, IAM, UFCW, TDSB Skilled Trades Council, and the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. Allies in the education sector were also invited to participate, and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and the Ontario Education Alliance (OEA) joined the Task Force.

In April of that year, the Harris Tories shifted their attention to the post-secondary sector with the passage of Bill 132. This legislation allowed private universities to operate in Ontario, and allowed Ontario's community colleges to offer applied degrees.

A month later, the government renewed its attack on elementary and secondary teachers by introducing Bill 74, which allowed school boards to remove teachers' participation in voluntary extra-curricular activities from the realm of collective bargaining. The legislation also gave each secondary teacher one extra class to teach per day, and allowed for informants to initiate investigations of school board trustees or employees suspected of dissent.

In September 2000, the government set up a task force to look at post-secondary education. In January the task force report was released, with recommendations on decentralizing college collective bargaining, and promoting measures that would give more corporate control over universities.

The following spring, in their 2001 budget, the Tories introduced a \$300 million tax credit for parents sending their children to private schools. Bill 45 completed the circle for the Harris Tories. They had created chaos in the publicly-funded school system, and would now provide parents with an incentive to move their children to private schools.

In May 2001, the OFL *Education Is A Right Task Force* initiated a 22-city tour of the province, to hear from front-line workers in the education system about how these Tory policies are affecting our schools, colleges and universities. The OFL officers met with approximately 200 local leadership people in Ottawa, Cornwall, Kingston, Belleville, Oshawa, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Hamilton, Oakville, Toronto, Barrie, North Bay, Timmins, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Owen Sound, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Sarnia and Windsor. Francophone representatives from across the province participated in a conference call in French as part of the tour.

The effects of the Harris Tories' all out assault on our education system and the people who work and study in it, are clearly illustrated in the words of the sisters and brothers who participated in those meetings.

## Creating The Crisis

### The Elementary and Secondary School System

Bill 100, *The School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act*, gave teachers in Ontario the right to bargain collectively in 1975. For 21 years, this legislation provided a relatively smooth bargaining process, which was generally accepted by both school boards and teacher unions. On August 23, 1996, the Harris Tories embarked on a review of Bill 100, with the aim of attaining province-wide bargaining and withdrawal of the right of teachers to strike. They commissioned Windsor lawyer Leon Paroian to carry out the review and report back to them in two months. The *Paroian Report* recommended, among other things, dismantling legislation regarding teacher bargaining; making workload, class size and other conditions of work non-negotiable; removing the right of teachers to strike; and removing principals and vice-principals from the bargaining unit.

At the same time, the government set up an education sub-panel of the *Who Does What* panel to advise the government on taxation, assessment, and provincial/municipal responsibilities. It was headed by former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie. The *Crombie Report* recommended:

- restricting the scope of decision-making by school boards and mandating the outsourcing of all business functions of school boards such as custodial, maintenance, office and clerical services, as well as special education services and educational assistants;
- removing the power of school boards to tax;
- taking complete control by the province of funding, and
- initiating secondary school reform.

The report also recommended that the sub-panel make recommendations on how to implement charter schools in the province, as soon as possible.

Although the panel insisted that its recommendations would lead to greater equity in funding education across the province, it was clear the strategy of placing financial control in the hands of the province was aimed at facilitating the government's goal of eliminating billions from their education budget. It was also clear that these recommendations, if implemented, would lead to a two-tiered, privatized education system, with powerless school boards and unions, and contracted out services.

In April 1997, the government began the process. The Harris Tories passed Bill 104, the *Fewer School Boards Act*. Bill 104 provided for the amalgamation of the majority of Ontario school boards, reducing the total number of boards from 129 to 72. It limited the number of trustees per board and capped their salaries at \$5,000 per year. It also barred school board employees and spouses from running for trustee positions.

The legislation also established the *Education Improvement Commission (EIC)* to oversee the transition from the old school

board system to the new system of governance with an enhanced role for school councils. The government's selling point for the new role for these school councils was increased parental involvement. In reality, however, the school councils are predominately involved in a lot of time-consuming fund-raising activities. This limits participation from single parent or low-income working families holding down more than one job, and serves to add to the unpaid work of parents, especially women. In essence, the expanded role of school councils was simply a way of downloading the paid responsibilities of trustees to unpaid volunteer parents. Parents have indicated that they do not wish to make administrative decisions or hire and fire personnel.

Bill 104 also mandated the EIC to research, facilitate discussion on, and make recommendations to the Minister on how to promote and facilitate the out-sourcing of non-instructional services by school boards, i.e., the jobs of clerical, custodial and other support workers.

A few months later, in response to a request from the Minister, the EIC issued a report entitled *The Road Ahead*. This report made a number of recommendations, not about school board amalgamation transition issues, which was the Commission's legislated function, but about the terms and conditions of employment of teachers. Many of these recommendations found their way into Bill 160.

Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, introduced in September 1997, completed the process of school board amalgamations set out in Bill 104, and dealt with other aspects of the school board amalgamations, such as governance, finance, labour relations, and matters related to instruction. The legislation gave Queen's

Park sweeping dictatorial powers over every aspect of the education system – school boards, funding, school councils, the number of teachers, and the amount of time teachers have to spend with their students.

Bill 160 targeted the two areas that stood in the way of the government's agenda: school board control of a significant part of educational funding, and the negotiated guarantees in teacher collective agreements. The bill allowed the government to reform the education system in these two key areas. It removed control of education spending and taxation from school boards and trustees and centralized it at Queen's Park. It allowed the provincial government to set funding levels through a new education funding formula, and vested in Cabinet powers which would enable the government to squeeze billions of dollars out of the education system. It also enabled the government to control teachers' terms and conditions of employment by regulation so that certain perceived cost items such as preparation time, class size, and the resultant number of teachers, could be removed from bargaining.

The legislation, along with the new funding formula, dramatically shifted the balance of power in collective bargaining in favour of school boards and the provincial government, and stripped teachers of essential collective bargaining rights. Although the right to bargain remained with the school boards, the power to fund and affect changes in working conditions moved into the hands of Cabinet. School boards could no longer raise funds to cover local education and bargaining goals.

The Harris Tories threw the system into further chaos by embarking upon a comprehensive review and rewriting of the curriculum for Grades 1 through OAC, at the same time that Bill 160 reduced teacher preparation time and professional development days by 50%.

In Bill 160 the government also granted itself new powers to direct an investigation of the financial affairs of a school board. The bill gave the Minister the power to take complete control of a school board in “probable financial default.” This new power ran counter to the traditions of local school board authority and was yet another power grab by Harris and his crew.

On October 27, 140,000 teachers and other education workers responded by staging a historic province-wide political protest, withdrawing their services and shutting down the province’s schools for two weeks. Following the protest, the Harris Tories slowed up on their dismantling of the education system and began to prepare for a general election in the spring of 1999.

### **Post-Secondary Education**

Following their re-election in the 1999 campaign, the Tories once again stepped up their assault on public education with the introduction in April 2000 of Bill 132, *The Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act*. Bill 132 approved the establishment of private, degree-granting universities in Ontario, including for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, and allowed Ontario’s Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology to offer applied degrees.

The government had already sown the seeds of a major crisis within the post-secondary system with cuts of \$400 million in operating funds for colleges and universities beginning in 1996/97. With the total cumulative loss now reaching \$2.4 billion, this crisis will begin to deepen over the next few years.

The double cohort of high school graduates (students from the old Grade 13 and the new Grade 12 graduating at the same time) caused by secondary school reform, along with the growth of the 18 to 24-year-old age group, and the demands of the market for more highly educated workers, will cause an increase in enrolment in post-secondary institutions by an estimated 90,000 students over the next decade. This in turn will necessitate the hiring of an additional 11,000 - 13,000 new professors, and the building of new facilities.

In the college system alone, a new study sponsored by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) estimates an enrollment increase of 32,000 students by 2006. To meet this demand, even at an inflated student-to-faculty ratio, the colleges will need to hire 2,919 new administrative, support and teaching staff. In addition 4,195 new staff will be needed to replace retiring staff.

The Harris Tories, however, have taken the same tack with the colleges and universities as with the school boards - make do with less. Ontario universities have the worst student-faculty ratio in the country. The ratio of full-time students to full-time faculty has increased 30% over the past ten years, and currently exceeds the average of the other nine provinces by more than 20%. Tuition fees increased by 10% for universities and 15% for colleges in 1996-97, and both increased by a further 20%

over the next three years. The Tories deregulated fees for graduate, professional, and some degree programs, resulting in increases as high as 521% in the last five years. At the same time, the new student loan program supposed to help offset rising fees never materialized, while changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) made student aid more difficult to access.

So the problem for the government was how to disguise the effects of chronic under-funding of the system. Their solution? Give degree-granting status to community colleges and open the province to private universities. Close examination of these two initiatives, however, show that they will not alleviate the problem.

College presidents successfully lobbied the government to give community colleges degree-granting status. However, what they did *not* receive was any new government funding to pay for these programs. As a result, colleges are robbing from existing programs to provide applied degree opportunities. The consequence of this shift in resources is that already under-funded programs are increasingly undermined.

One has to wonder whether a move to degree-granting status is as important as some of the other issues facing colleges: for example, understaffing, a desperate need for increased capital investment, the loss of remedial programs, and libraries that have not had their collections updated in a decade.

Despite the government's propaganda to the contrary, private universities do, in fact, draw on public dollars. Many private universities save money by not having to provide research and library facilities for their students, who use public university libraries. Their students have access to loans and bursaries administered by tax dollars, just as students at public institutions do. Further, tax deductions are available for people who make donations to private universities, just as they are to those who donate to public post-secondary institutions. In the U.S., private universities receive an estimated 30% of their income from either direct or indirect public subsidies.

In addition, private universities will not ease the situation of over-crowding. Tuition fees, which are set by the market at private universities, tend to be higher in the private institutions, making them generally inaccessible to the majority of recent high school graduates. The result is that enrolment in private institutions tends to come from older, already employed, well-off students (often financed by their employers) rather than from those just graduating from secondary school.

It is quite probable, then, that a situation could occur where our public universities continue to be over-crowded while the private ones have unused capacity. What is to prevent the government from stepping up its cuts to the public universities in order to push more students into the private ones? Cuts in funding, increased reliance on revenues from the private sector for research, and increased tuition and other fees for students, along with a decrease in services, are deliberate strategies employed by right-wing governments to reduce reliance on government funding and make universities increasingly private. And experience in other jurisdictions has shown that as public dollars are syphoned off by private universities, the public universities fall into further decline.

To make matters even worse, once private for-profit universities are entrenched in the province, and accessing tax dollars, all manner of other private institutions will also attempt to establish themselves as “universities.” And as the law stands now, out-of-province institutions do not have to meet Ontario standards. With this government’s obsession with privatization and deregulation, there is no reason to think that it will make any effort to force these institutions to meet the kind of high standards that have been the hallmark of our public universities. The resulting lower standards coupled with exorbitant tuition fees could easily result in a system where wealthy students virtually “buy” university degrees from sub-standard institutions. The end result will be the devaluing of an Ontario post-secondary degree.

As universities and colleges become increasingly private, to whom will they be accountable? Not to the taxpayer, the government, or the students. They will be accountable only to the private interests that fund and, therefore, control them.

### **The Second Attack on Elementary and Secondary Education**

In May 2000, the government renewed its attack on elementary and secondary teachers by introducing Bill 74, *An Act to Amend the Education Act*. Bill 74 authorized school boards to make teachers’ participation in voluntary extra-curricular activities mandatory, and removed these activities from the realm of collective bargaining. The legislation allowed school boards to unilaterally implement alterations to collective agreement provisions restricting staff reductions, and gave each secondary teacher one extra class to teach per day. It also created a system of informants who could initiate investigations of any board trustees or employees suspected of dissent.

Bill 74 further eroded the rights of teachers and the ability of their unions to represent them. It further stripped autonomy from duly elected school boards, and concentrated more power over education into the hands of the provincial government.

Bill 74 was an unprecedented attack on the collective bargaining rights of teachers in the province of Ontario. It continued the Harris Government’s intrusion into the collective bargaining process and further demonstrated its determination to manage, in a previously unheard of way, virtually every area of the education sector. Bill 74 set the minimum workload and working conditions for teachers, which meant that teachers could not negotiate anything, which did not comply with these limits. It also stripped teachers of the longstanding right to



work to rule, thereby leading to increased strike activity. Teachers now faced the prospect of negotiating monetary issues with school boards who themselves had absolutely no control over their own budgets.

Bill 74 further stripped school boards of management control, and for many in the education sector turned collective bargaining into an Alice-in-Wonderland farce.

In terms of instructional time, Bill 74 impacted most dramatically on the secondary school system. In fact, the legislation entirely altered the manner in which minimum instructional time is determined at the secondary level. Rather than basing minimum instructional time on 1,250 minutes in a period of five instructional days, teachers in secondary schools now had to provide instruction in an average of at least 6.67 “eligible courses” out of eight per day. These changes were made in spite of the fact that, according to StatsCan figures, Ontario teachers worked 45.4 hours a week at their main job and 7.5 hours of unpaid overtime a week in 1997, compared to the Canadian average of 42.4 and 6.4 hours of unpaid overtime.

With Ontario’s secondary school teachers now assigned more classes to teach, they had less time to offer help to students and to prepare and evaluate students’ work. Teachers found it difficult to maintain the level of quality in their programs as in the past, and felt increasingly frustrated as they saw students suffering alongside them from these changes.

When the smoke cleared, however, the Harris Tories passed the bill but failed to proclaim those sections dealing with compulsory extra-curricular activities. The debate that the issue had sparked served to

divert public attention from the real issue, which was that the number of teachers and the time they would have to spend with each student was being decreased. And the government could still keep those provisions as a hammer to hold over the heads of teachers in the future.

## **The Second Attack on Post-Secondary Education**

In September 2000, the Harris Tories turned their attention back to post-secondary education, with the establishment of the *Investing in Students Task Force*. According to the government, the task force was created to advise the Minister on “ways to ensure that students continue to have access to affordable, high-quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” The five-member task force, made up of a lawyer, university and college presidents and a couple of CEO’s, was mandated to “study college and university administrative operations across the province, examine options for shared services and identify best practices for administrative functions such as information technology, procurement and data collection.”

After supposedly consulting with post-secondary stakeholders, the task force submitted its final report in January 2001. In the 160-page report, the task force recommended, among other things, the elimination of the Council of Regents, which governs the community colleges, and the decentralization of college collective bargaining. It also promoted measures that would give more corporate control over universities. The task force failed to deal with the issue of the maintenance of buildings deferred over a number of years, which now amounts to about \$1 billion and has resulted in crumbling infrastructures on campuses across the province.

Although point 4 of its mandate specifically instructed the task force to “seek the views of students, post-secondary institutions, *faculty and staff associations*, local communities, business groups, and other organizations as appropriate,” OPSEU and CUPE were not only not invited to the consultations, but were turned down when

they asked to have input.

If the recommendations of this report are implemented by the government, the community college system in Ontario will be considerably weakened. Power will be decentralized and left in the hands of the college presidents, and smaller, rural and northern colleges will be in jeopardy. The door will also be further opened to the privatization of university services and to private universities themselves.

## **The Third Attack on Elementary and Secondary Education**

In the spring 2001 budget, the Tories took the public by surprise with the introduction of a \$300 million tax credit for parents sending their children to private schools. Bill 45, *The Responsible Choices For Growth and Accountability Act*, would provide relief on the first \$7,000 per year for each child attending a private elementary or secondary school. This translates into a subsidy of \$42,000 per child attending private schools from Grades 1 through 12.

In the last election, both Education Minister Janet Ecker and Premier Harris stated publicly, that they would not introduce vouchers or extend funding to private religious schools. That promise was broken last spring. With Bill 45, the privatization agenda of the Harris Tories was made crystal clear. First create a crisis to give parents reason to want to take their kids out of the public system, and then provide them with the financial means to do so.

The effect that these students leaving will have on the public education system is also crystal clear. Because school boards are funded on a per capita basis, a board loses about \$7,000 for every student who leaves the public system. Some estimates are that the \$300 million tax break could rise to as much as \$2 billion in five years. That's \$2 billion exiting a system that has already been cut by \$2 billion since the Tories took power in 1995.

The tax credit will encourage the proliferation of more private schools. There are currently 734 private schools in Ontario, with a total enrollment of approximately 102,000 students. They charge anywhere from \$5,000 to \$40,000 per student, so the tax credit does not help the average working family to afford to send their children to the majority of these schools.

Private schools in this province are not subject to the same standards as public schools. They are not required to hire qualified teachers with valid Ontario teaching certificates, adhere to a standard curriculum, or report their finances to the government. Schools in the publicly-funded system must administer standardized tests; private schools do not have to unless, at the secondary school level, a private school wants to grant credits and diplomas. Then it is required to administer the Grade 10 literacy test. All that is required to open a private school is \$250 and a simple application form.

Private schools are also permitted to discriminate both in their hiring practices, and in the choice of which students they accept, including students with special needs. The Premier has tried to suggest that anti-discriminatory laws will prevent such discrimination, but Sections 18 and 24 of the Human Rights Code specifically exempt "religious, educational (etc.) institutions

which are primarily engaged in serving the interests of persons who are identified by their creed" from having to admit students and hire teachers on a totally non-discriminatory basis.

The path this leads us down is clear. It will lead us further toward a two-tiered education system: one for the wealthy and an inferior one for the rest of us. The tax credit will have a spiraling effect as resources move out of the public system and into private institutions, and as private schools compete with the publicly-funded system for teachers in a climate of a severe teacher shortage. Kids from poor and working class families will be left behind in a system that will become increasingly neglected. And the business friends of Harris and his cronies will have an open door to move in and make mega-profits off Ontario's schools.

The Harris Tories added insult to injury in June 2001, with the passage of Bill 80, the *Education Amendment Act*. The bill introduced de facto province-wide bargaining for teachers. By 2004, all contracts will have a common expiry date of August 31. In addition, Bill 80 forces teachers to re-certify every 5 years by completing 14 courses and passing a written test.

## **The Effect on Ontario's Elementary and Secondary Schools**

The government's attitude of "do more with less" is reflected in its new funding formula. The government micro-manages the education system from Queen's Park while removing any local autonomy from school boards. Trustees now act as a rubber stamp to centrally determined plans, and in turn, the rest of the system follows suit. Even the government-appointed Education Improvement Commission pointed out that the funding formula is deficient in many crucial areas: English as a Second Language, French language boards, the learning opportunities grant, First Nations students, special education, pupil accommodation, the small school factor, small boards administration, teacher compensation and remote and rural transportation grants. These areas combined add up to more than 75% of total education funding. The EIC failed to mention the deficiencies in heritage and international languages.

One of the fundamental problems with the funding formula is that it deals in median numbers and attaches a dollar figure to everything. It removes any ability of boards to develop local solutions to local problems. The formula pays for the maintenance of 100 square feet for each elementary student, 130 square feet for each secondary student, and 100 square feet for every adult learner, at a cost of \$5.20 per square foot. This square footage includes hallways, some of which, particularly in older buildings, are disproportionately large. The \$5.20 figure ignores space used by community groups and child care centres.

### **Deterioration of Buildings and Maintenance**

The government's "one size fits all" funding formula has created problems in the operating and upgrading of schools because of the diverse challenges the boards face. In the northwest, for example, the cost of living is higher, due to higher heating and

transportation costs, and a smaller population. The funding formula applies the same rules to all boards, however, whether they are in Rainy River or in Windsor. The formula also hinders the ability of boards to respond to unexpected events. When heating costs rise dramatically, for example, boards end up making cuts in other areas in order to make up for the shortfall.

Regardless of the actual number of students in a school or the size of the schools, boards are given operating and maintenance funding according to the number of "full-time equivalent" (FTE) students and the average amount of space the government believes each student needs. This FTE way of counting students differs from the "headcount enrollment" method used previously.

Across Ontario, the changed method of counting resulted in the virtual disappearance of 131,526 students in 1997-1998. At a time when every student counts in the funding formula, different counting methods can skew the figures badly.

In any case, the money provided by the formula is inadequate. Schools have reported that the funding formula has made it impossible for them to complete essential projects, such as roof replacements. Schools housed in older buildings are particularly hard hit. The formula often doesn't allow for the replacement of old buildings. Because the formula compels boards to assess their space needs on a board-wide basis, if space is available anywhere in the board's area, it cannot create new space for the demands of particular schools. And because the boards are now either huge geographically, have huge student populations or changing demographics, problems arise when boards can't create student spaces where they are needed. Some

schools are threatened with closure, while others face overcrowding.

This is a particular problem for the French-language boards, many of whom inherited large, older schools from the English system under the restructuring.

In addition, boards cannot plan for enrollment increases because they only qualify for construction money once a space problem exists. Students end up in portables until the board meets the funding model's rigid criteria.

As schools are forced to close, more and more children are forced into bussing. One caretaker from the Belleville area pointed out that school children in his area are now forced to leave home at a very early hour to catch their bus to school. Parents are concerned for their children's safety now that many have to catch the bus so much earlier and young children are left waiting, literally in the dark, for the morning bus to arrive.

In Windsor, school closures have become the hottest issue locally, as seven catholic elementary schools are slated to close in the 2001-2002 school year. Many young children will be forced to take the bus to school, and local parent councils are mobilizing opposition to try to stop the closures.

### **Cuts to Support Services**

The Harris Tories' artificial distinction between "classroom" and "non-classroom" expenditures worsens the problem. The government has defined "classroom" and "non-classroom" in a way that excludes supports that are vital for students, such as custodians and school secretaries. The Ministry of Education's definition of "classroom" expenditures includes: teachers, supply teachers, teaching

assistants, learning materials, classroom computers, professionals and para-professionals, library and guidance, and staff development. Their definition of "non-classroom expenditures" includes: teacher preparation time, principals and vice-principals, department heads, school operations (clerical support and caretakers), administration, transportation and adult and continuing education.

Many school boards, in an attempt to create savings in the non-classroom lines, have cut back on custodial and maintenance in order to move money into classroom expenditures. In fact, the Ministry of Education reported that in excess of \$100 million of the budget for non-classroom expenditures was spent elsewhere in the 1999-2000 school year. The result has been a serious decline in school cleanliness and upkeep.

*"The classroom vs. non-classroom envelopes pit one group against the other. It's a case of special education vs. plant improvement."*

*- Jeff, secondary school teacher from Ottawa*

The under-funding of support services, including custodial and secretarial support, has led boards to cut staff and look increasingly towards contracting out. The Kawartha Pine Ridge Board in the Peterborough area, for example, currently has a \$10 million deficit. \$1.7 million is coming out of custodial/maintenance to offset that deficit. There is no money for cleaning supplies, and the schools are dirty. The Board is also looking at contracting out the school cafeterias, and with it, the jobs of seven CUPE members.

In fact, the line imposed between "classroom" and "non-classroom" expenditures appears very much to be more

about carving out and privatizing the non-teaching jobs in Ontario's schools than it is about maintaining expenditures. Some boards have already contracted out their custodial services, often with unsatisfactory results. Contracting out and privatization have led to reduced quality of services and public accountability, as school boards have lost control of those outsourced services. And contracting out often costs much more than keeping a service in-house. Profit and corporate overhead have to be written into contracts, and profits are often increased by cutting services. Taxpayers end up footing the bill in the long run.

*"When boards contract out cleaning to private companies like Service Master, they are often required to use their products as well, which may not be environmentally friendly. The contracting out increases the cost, but they figure that's O.K. because the money goes to the private sector. They're willing to pay big bucks as long as it goes outside the system."*

*- Beth, secondary school teacher from Simcoe*

Frank, a custodian from the St. Catharines area, gave an example from his board, where caretakers trained to do preventative maintenance were replaced with a private company that charged \$75 per hour, and did half as good a job.

Contracting out of custodial/maintenance jobs also puts students at risk. The custodian, a reliable member of the school community, is replaced by a stranger who has access to everything in the school. Most contractors have few or no screening practices in the hiring of their employees, and high rates of employee turnover due to lower pay levels and reduced benefits.

*"Our board contracted out the custodial/maintenance jobs. They laid them all off (members of SEIU 210). It lasted 3 years, and then the board realized it was the biggest mistake they ever made, and reversed it."*

*- Laura, school secretary from Windsor*

Custodial staff used to wash the desks every day, now teachers and students are asked to do it in many schools. Some boards have cut corners by going to four-day cleaning, split shifts or alternate day cleaning. These schedules can lead to potentially tragic situations. At a school in Simcoe District, for example, in the caretaker's absence between shifts, two students and a teacher were trying to move a piano. When the teacher went for additional help, the piano fell on one of the students - a 7-year-old boy.

The health of students is also being compromised in Ontario's schools. Cuts to custodial and maintenance staff have resulted in less cleanliness in the schools and the use of cheap cleaning supplies, which in turn have led to an increase in the number of students experiencing allergies and asthma attacks while at school.

In one school of 250 kids, 10% were reported subject to allergies.

Things are just as bad in the French school boards. Cuts often affect support staff the most, since boards tend to start cutting at the bottom end of the salary range. Some custodians in Toronto are supporting families on salaries of \$20,000 a year, and two janitors now do work that used to be done by five.

Other boards cut corners by eliminating lunchroom supervisory staff. In some elementary schools, children are eating lunches in their classrooms unsupervised. In others, paid staff have been replaced by parent or student volunteers. In one central Ontario school, 11-year-old Grade 6 students from the gifted program look after the younger children during lunch, help dress them, and clean up after them without any adult supervision, in exchange for a free piece of pizza once a month.

### **Lack of Resources**

A common result of the massive decrease in funding to both elementary and secondary schools is cuts to programming. Mary-Judith, an elementary school teacher from Hamilton, reported that in her school, computer site time has been rolled into library time; the librarian is gone; the music specialist is gone; and the guidance counselors are gone. Carol, an elementary school teacher from Ottawa, observed that many schools now have no libraries, which decreases the opportunities for students to learn basic research techniques, and impacts on life long learning. Schools in her area have also lost their home economics, technician, and design programs. While the government purports to be interested in promoting literacy, the most effective way to do so would be to adequately fund school libraries.

*“We used to have Grade 7-8 home economics. Now there’s none...the same for shop, music instruction, librarian, and a library. We had two secretaries, now we have one. We had three to four custodians, now they rotate the cleaning every other day. The school nurse is gone. We used to have money for two sets of books. Now that’s gone, and we’re using 1985 geography and history books. The money*

*for supplies is gone, the kids have to bring their own.”*

*- Stuart, elementary school teacher of 20 years from Thunder Bay*

A common problem resulting from the change in curriculum is that resources didn’t follow the new curriculum. In the elementary system, the number of split grades has increased by 30% since EQAO (Education Quality Assessment Office) started keeping statistics, which means that many teachers are dealing with more than one curriculum in the same class and no resources to support them.

In many schools, letters are sent to parents at the beginning of the year telling them that they must supply pens, pencils, rulers and glue for their children. However, the funding cuts affect more than just books, pens and paper. Some schools have no money left for paper towels in the washrooms and students are forced to use toilet paper to dry their hands. Beth, a Belleville secondary school teacher, described how, at the beginning of February, she put in a request for clean cheesecloths to clean the blackboards. She received two in May and was told she had to make them last to the end of the year.

To offset the lack of resources, fund-raising has taken over the lives of teachers, parents and students. Once used to cover the cost of perceived “extras” like excursions, fund-raising is now an essential part of school life. Teachers complain of having to constantly handle money in the classroom - selling pizza and hot dogs, and being involved in fund-raising on a constant basis.

*“Teachers get fed up with fund-raising and/or paying for things out of their own pockets... The schools are using...professionals to sell cookies.”*

- Andy, elementary school teacher from Belleville

School councils have also become money-generating machines to replace the dollars taken from the system. However, there is a wide disparity in the amounts they can raise, depending on the socio-economic status of the area. Teachers talked about the schools in their area making deals to bring in *Pepsi* and *Coke*, as well as cafeteria companies that provide kick backs to the school. Some even have candy carts that go around to the students during the day selling candy to raise money. Carol, an elementary school teacher from Arnprior, stated that her school was bringing in more money from fund-raising than the budget they get from the board...over \$10,000.

The growing influence of the volunteer sector has also become an issue. As resources are reduced, the use of volunteers increases and leads to more privatization.

### **Workload**

The massive outflow of money from the system has also translated into a huge workload problem for the people who work in it. With many schools sharing principals and vice-principals, work is downloaded from administrators to teachers to support staff. Principals and vice-principals are often not around to handle administrative and disciplinary tasks, and their work often gets shifted to the secretarial staff. Every medical and behavioral problem gets funneled through secretaries, who are forced to deal with everything from administering medication and first aid, to handling misbehaving students, to calming angry parents before they get to the principal.

In schools across the province, secretaries take work home, do it on breaks, or stay late. Wendy, a school secretary from Ottawa, described how her board makes the existing staff do lunchtime supervision, which cuts into their own lunch breaks. Staff is taking buy-outs and is not replaced, even though the workload is still the same. In her school, the supply secretary was even asked to administer medication to a student.

Teachers are also suffering from stress as a result of the incredible increase in their workload. There is no staff to support new technologies being introduced into the schools, and no training for the existing staff. Class sizes are up, prep time is down, the new curriculum is being implemented without training, a new report card is introduced, and professional development is done on teachers' own time with their own money. For teachers of Grades 3 and 6, there is also the time that must be spent preparing for the standardized tests.

*"I have to change the way I relate to the kids. I see 120 kids per day now. We have to have colleagues come in just to give us washroom breaks."*

- Bob, secondary school teacher from Belleville

Teachers in the elementary system also have to deal with split grades, which sometimes means working from 14-16 documents, with as many as 600 expectations. And the new curriculum doesn't easily allow teachers to blend subjects. It is so much work to prepare for an occasional teacher if the regular teacher is sick, that many teachers just keep on working even when they are ill. In addition, occasional teachers are now in such short supply, that when regular teachers are absent it means combining classes or using non-qualified personnel. Carol, an elementary school teacher from



Brockville, described how her school has pulled in bus drivers to cover off absent teachers.

It adds even more stress if a teacher with split grades has one of the grades to be tested. If a teacher is doing the testing with one grade in the class, the other grade must be sent to another teacher, which adds disruption and stress to that teacher's day.

Lack of occasional teachers affects the high schools as well. Many schools are using parents or other volunteers as monitors to supervise classes without a teacher. Bob, a secondary school teacher from Newmarket, described how, at his school of 100 teachers, the first two to call in sick get replaced with occasional teachers and the rest of the classes are covered off by co-workers.

The most striking consequence of the overwhelming workload on workers in all parts of the system, combined with the constant hammering by the Harris Tories, is an all-time low in staff morale. Use of Long Term Disability (LTD) has increased dramatically throughout the system, and is being used as much by younger teachers as older ones.

*"Our board slashed 28 full-time equivalent support staff positions, which affected 59 people. Now we have less people doing more work, and more members on WSIB, LTD, etc. We lost 10 full-time equivalent support staff last year alone."*

*- Pam, support staff representative from  
Parry Sound*

Across the province, teachers report being exhausted. They say they are forced to spend more and more of their time on activities other than teaching: marking, discipline, filling in ministry forms. They are working harder than ever, but have less

time with their students. Add to that the message from the government that the profession is not valued. This encourages some, including the media, to be hostile, and accord teachers less professional respect. This in turn gives the message to students that they do not need to respect their teachers.

Pat, a teacher from the Kitchener area, reported an increase in the number of people in her area looking to escape the stress, evidenced by a rise in long-term disability, mental stress and long-term leaves, and greater use of the EAP program. The statistics for LTD use in her area are 15 people per 1,000. John, a secondary school teacher from the same area, reported that 200 out of 1,400 secondary teachers were requesting leave of some kind, with 60 willing to go to part-time with the resulting reduction in pay. Some local teachers' federations report losing as much as 10% of their experienced teachers.

*"I can't stand the politics, and I spend more time doing paperwork and less time in the classroom with the new report cards and the ISA's (Individual Student Assessments). I'm leaving full-time teaching after 33 years, and going on to the supply list so I can just teach."*

*- Norma, elementary school teacher from  
North Bay*

A recent analysis of stress-related long-term disability (LTD) claims by the Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan (OTIP) shows that Ontario teachers have a rate of 15 claims per 1,000 insured members. This compares unfavorably to the insurance industry's overall standards that are in the range of five to eight claims per 1,000 insured. For nurses and air-traffic controllers, for example, the rate is eight to ten claims per 1,000 insured members.

Many new teachers are leaving the profession in the first three years of teaching, unable or unwilling to tolerate the working conditions, the stress, and the disrespect they are subjected to. The situation is similar in the French system. There is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in the north, and a shortage of occasional teachers. Alain, a teacher in the French school system, reported that in 1997 they had 1,000 full-time teachers and 800 qualified occasional teachers. Today there are only 100 qualified occasional teachers between four boards. In addition, the boards play games with the numbers so they can get away with hiring non-qualified substitutes to save money, even when qualified occasional teachers are available.

*“Morale is down, everybody wants early retirement. The tech shop teacher retires: the shop class shuts down. Younger teachers are getting out, LTD is increasing, principals and vice-principals are leaving. Men, in particular, seem to be leaving the profession. At Lake Superior High, out of 22 teachers, 17 are female and 5 are male, the 2 administrators are female, and the secretaries and custodians are female.”*  
- John, secondary school teacher from Terrace Bay

Many believe that the resulting teacher shortage will soon amount to a full-scale crisis. John, a custodian from Windsor, gave a local example of the crisis in Windsor-Essex, where 300 new teachers are needed in September of 2001, out of about 500 students in teachers' college. The situation is exacerbated by the situation in the colleges and universities. The cost of some teacher courses has increased from \$250 to \$800, and in most cases teachers are

paying for these courses out of their own pockets. Queen's University physical and health education department has 900 applicants per year, out of which they choose 85-90 students. Many of these are using their degree as a springboard to a medical-oriented profession, not in order to become physical education teachers.

### Students

The new curriculum has presented difficulties for many of Ontario's students. The rapidity of the changes, the rigidity of the curriculum, and the move to standardized testing have all contributed to undue stress for a lot of students.

*“The rigid curriculum doesn't suit the developmental level of young children, as it expects all kids to function at the same arbitrary level. And with no time in the new curriculum for review, it sets up winners and losers at the age of 6.”*

- Ann, elementary school teacher from North Bay

Although the government boasts about the new high standards for students, most teachers are convinced the standards are inappropriate, and purposely so. Material at a Grade 10 level is being taught in Grade 8, and teachers are forced to teach the material in a specific block of time and move on. There is no time to wait and make sure the students have grasped it. In Mike Harris' "survival of the fittest" education system, many students will get left behind. With classes for extra help cut significantly, there is less help for kids who need it, and schools will increasingly be of value only to those students who can get by on their own. The Harris Tories' agenda will result in kids dropping out of school, thus limiting their access to quality, good-paying jobs.

The new curriculum has been hastily implemented and under resourced. The students, who started in Grade 9 with a new curriculum, saw a brand new curriculum again in Grade 10, now 11 and next year, in Grade 12. They have truly been guinea pigs of the secondary curriculum by taking new programs and often with no textbooks. Textbook publishers can only prepare so quickly for these changes and are only willing to publish books with enough market value. Once again, students in basic level courses lose out as publishers print only books on which they will profit. Students in senior classes with lower enrollments, the arts, French and technology, lose out as well.

Class size and teacher workload are also causing problems for students. Student/teacher ratios have gone up across the province. Some elementary teachers report having 35 or more students in a class. Teachers have less time to spend with individual students, and there are fewer resource teachers. School is a “survival of the fittest” environment where some students will be able to carry on, on their own, and others will be left behind. Drop out rates will go back to the 1950's.

Standardized testing of Grade 3 and 6 students is also causing widespread problems. Students, especially young ones, learn at different rates and in different ways. Failing the tests brands some youngsters as failures before they've had a chance to catch up. Everything is judged against narrowly defined academic accomplishment, with no credit given for effort or creativity.

Standardized testing also excludes some students from the system. Standardized tests have been found to be biased against females, students from low-income families, racial and ethnic minorities, and students with disabilities. If a student fails, there's a greater chance that they'll drop out of school, which can end up having repercussions on both the individual and society. School choice will exacerbate the situation, as it will hit working and lower income families hardest. The public schools that they attend will be ranked through tests that are already skewed against them to start with.

*“It's a case of class warfare... The privileged move ahead while others are excluded. It is part of an elitist ideology, the aim of which is to create a class system in Ontario... There is no time for music, art, stories... there is a huge philosophical shift. Teachers are becoming the implementers of the new neo-conservative world.”*

*- Robin, teacher from Brantford*

Parents and some teachers hoped that the tests would be used for identification and support of students in need. Unfortunately, that isn't happening, as so far there is no remedial feedback from the tests. They seem, in fact, to be used more as a test of teachers' work.

In Manitoba, the government has moved away from testing. They discovered that some students are unable to handle tests. Add to that the fact that tests are extremely limited in what they really tell you. However, they have been given so much authority that teachers have to fit the whole curriculum in ahead of the test and drop things not relevant to the test. The entire school's activity gets geared to improving test scores, since poor results make certain schools look bad. But the results don't take into account the different student populations in different schools.

Standardized testing also forces teachers to "teach to the test." It ends up taking valuable time from other classroom work. Things like creative problem solving, citizenship, tech, athletics, interpersonal skills and the arts, all fall by the wayside and end up becoming devalued in the system.

*"Standardizing is a problem... we're making citizens, not widgets!"*  
- Todd, elementary school teacher from St. Catharines

When the government's *Effective Schools Task Force* toured the province in the spring of 2001, many parents in attendance condemned the standardized tests. (In the U.S., where standardized tests are being used to rate both schools and students, parents are getting injunctions to stop them, or refusing to let their children take them.) It costs over \$9 million at each grade level to administer the tests. Despite the cost, the Harris Tories are proposing to extend them to every grade level in the future, and use them to determine pass or fail for students. David, an elementary school teacher from Bowmanville, pointed out that the tests would affect access, as the government

begins to tie test scores to funding. The result will be to create have and have-not schools and have and have-not students and teachers.

A similar situation exists at the secondary level. The curriculum is too difficult, there is no extra help, and teachers are too busy. There is a lack of Education Assistants and Special Education teachers, libraries are gone or only open part-time, and there is a lack of guidance counselors. The extra classes being taught by teachers means that there's no time to deal with students' problems, or even to notice their problems. And in any event, there's no time to pick up extra material and develop a program to deal with student needs.

A disturbing outcome of the rewriting of the curriculum is the deliberate removal by the Harris Tories of anti-racism education, anti-violence education, and education around homophobia. The lack of exposure to these issues comes at a time when violence in the schools is on the increase, and "bullying" is a hot topic.

The Harris Tories' solution is boot camps and codes of conduct in place of education. Individual teachers who want to insert these topics into the curriculum have to do so on their own, and teacher unions have developed their own materials for their members to use in the classroom.

### **Special Needs Students**

Students needing special education are suffering the most. All automatic funding has been removed, and replaced by ISA (Individual Student Assessment) funding. Special education teachers have to document the needs of the students, supported by time-consuming visits to doctors and psychologists. The problem is compounded by pressure from the Ontario College of Psychologists to have all assessments done by psychologists holding Ph.D.'s, and not Master's degrees. Some people have waited up to three years for the psychologists' reports. A *People For Education* survey found that 37,000 students were waiting for special education services, with over half of these waiting for assessments for special education funding.

*"Two of our three full-time special ed teachers don't even see the kids, including me. All we do is paperwork."*

*- Sergio, special education teacher from  
Hamilton*

Under the new system, most special education teachers (specialists trained to work with special needs students) spend the majority of their time filling out forms to get the money to hire education assistants to actually work with the kids. Special education teachers now spend thousands of hours jumping through hoops to try to access the ISA funds, to the point that they no longer have contact with the students they were trained to help.

Once the paperwork is done, it is sent away to be reviewed, and decisions are made that are often based on restricted criteria that do not meet the needs of the students. "Proof of need" has to be established. Sometimes the funding is denied because the teacher hasn't jumped through the right hoops, and the government makes the situation worse

by constantly changing the rules for allotting the money.

Cheryl, an elementary school teacher from Peterborough, talked about special education teachers "working with paper, instead of children" and the effects that the new funding system is having. A student with Down's Syndrome in her school, who has been working with an education assistant for several years, has improved to the point of being able to speak in phrases. As a result, this student will likely not get funding again.

Donna, a teacher from Dryden, gave an example from her school where a multi-handicapped student was turned down for funding after two years because the criteria for getting the funding changed. After twelve years of teaching, Donna wants out.

The amalgamation of boards also means that special education teachers often have large geographic areas to service. Many talked about spending more time in their cars getting to their various schools than they do actually seeing the students. They often travel long distances to see one or two students.

*"Kingston students have lots of behavioral problems that don't go away just because there's no money. These students need early intervention."*

*- Judy, clinical psychologist from Kingston*

Rick, an elementary school teacher from Cambridge, reported that his board will have 11 fewer special education teachers next year, which will result in 400 fewer students getting the help they need. In some areas, there are waiting lists of up to a year for special education assistants. Speech language therapy is often available on a rotating basis only, and parents have to do the program at home with their kids.

Special education must address a wider spectrum of needs than ever before, with fewer resources. The way the new system operates, assessments have to be done every year. Sometimes there is no money available for these assessments, so parents have to pay for their child's assessment themselves. Once approved, however, there is no guarantee that the money will go to help their child. It goes into a special education allotment, and then the board decides where it goes. John, a support worker from Hamilton, gave an example from his school of a Grade 4 student who spends the entire day spinning around in a class of 30 kids, and receives only 30 minutes of help a day. Bill 82, passed in 1980, mandates that once a student is identified with special needs, the board is supposed to supply it. In reality, it often doesn't happen that way.

Education research has shown the importance of early intervention for students with special needs, such as speech language difficulties. The need for Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) who have the expertise is on the increase while, on the other hand, the numbers of PSSP are decreasing.

*“Due to the funding formula, boards can no longer raise additional money for special programs. We have high levels of mental disability in our area, and pre-Bill 160 we could go to the trustees to get funds for special programs. When someone had a good idea we could customize it to the community. Now everyone's hands are tied due to the funding formula.”*

*- Bruce, secondary school teacher from Windsor*

The situation is the same in the French boards. The impact is severe on special needs students, especially those with

learning disabilities or behavioral problems. Lucy, a secondary school teacher, talked about her school, where there are five to ten special needs students identified per class, including those with physical disabilities, on waiting lists. These students are not getting the attention needed, especially in the early grades.

Students needing ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction are also being affected. In the past, ESL programs were based on a 5-year model because studies say that 5-7 years is necessary for complete integration of the language. Now ESL students are only funded up to 3 years, and only if they come from another country. Mexican Mennonites in the Hamilton area, for example, are not eligible for funding. Under the old system, a student could stay at one level of support until they were ready to move on. Now, when the time is up for each level, the student must move on whether or not they are ready.

And after years of advocating for special needs students to be fully integrated into Ontario classrooms, some boards, because of lack of dollars, are considering going back to a segregated system.

## **Parents and Communities**

The effects on parents and communities at large are also an area of concern. The province has all the money, and the school trustees have all the headaches. The boards have little power, and many of their functions have been downloaded to the school councils. However, only some parents are able to attend school council meetings, and so the councils often end up not being representative of the population. With the introduction of the tax credit, many parents will leave the system and that could leave many school councils without enough parents who are able to participate. And schools in more affluent areas are able to raise a lot more money than those in the poorer areas.

The proliferation of user fees is hitting parents across the province, and reducing accessibility to the education system. User fees have become an integral part of the system, as parents are forced to pay for a myriad of goods and services that were previously provided free of charge: courses, facilities, after-hours bussing, equipment, tuition fees, administrative fees, computer fees, transfer fees, lab fees, and material fees. This contributes to added stress and decreased self-esteem for many lower-income and working class parents, for whom such fees represent financial hardship. Dependence by schools on fund-raising aimed at parents just adds to the problem. In Guelph, one parent gave the example of having to pay \$2 to use the playground equipment. Shop classes and trades courses all have fees. One parent stated that in three days she spent more than \$160 in fees for her son. A Windsor parent said she now has to give \$65 cash or certified cheque just to register one child for high school. A teacher described how kids in her school had to bring in packages of 500 sheets of paper to class at the beginning of the term.

Communities are also being adversely affected. In the Niagara area, one school is charging \$27,000 to rent its gym for basketball for the year. Learning Disability Niagara had to cancel its programs because it couldn't afford to rent space in the schools anymore. The Cub pack at Carlton School in the Ottawa area had to go to meeting every second week. The effects are particularly severe in rural communities where the school is the community center.

Communities are being affected in other ways as well. Parents and school councils have become major fund-raisers for their schools. In some areas, unfortunately, they are now forced into competing for dollars with unfunded agencies in their own communities, such as charities, women's organizations, etc. School closures are also having spin-off effects for community organizations. Forty per cent of all child care programs are located in schools, leaving them in a very vulnerable position as boards proceed to close down schools to comply with the requirements of the new funding formula.

### **Adult Education**

Adult education programs have been particularly hard hit by the cuts made by the Harris Tories. A 1996 OSSTF survey of 15 boards of education, after the cuts to adult education that year, found that five boards managed to continue adult day schools with full-time teachers, five cancelled adult day school programs and moved to a continuing education model, and five tried to keep day school open with a mixture of the other two approaches.

By the year 2001, the situation had worsened for adult education. In the Belleville area, adult education courses are now being run totally under Continuing Education, and only after 4 p.m. and in the evenings. In the Hamilton area, the number of providers of adult programs shrank from eight or nine to four (two school boards, one college and one literacy council). In Renfrew County, few opportunities existed for adult education courses due to the problem of distance. After years of working to get “rural and remote” funding, the board now has no commitment to continuing education.

The Ottawa/Carleton District School Board has experienced major cuts to continuing education and ESL programs. They used to have three adult education centres for new Canadians, and now have one. The adult education program of the Kawartha Pine Ridge School Board in the Peterborough area was privatized. In Toronto, adult education was the first area cut. Seven centres in the city are being merged, which will cut even more spaces.

The cuts to adult education have had serious implications for equity-seeking groups. At the time the Tory cuts to adult education began, 63% of adult students were female. Visible minorities and persons with disabilities were represented at more than twice their proportion in the general population in Ontario. These groups, needing the special services available in fully funded day schools, were disproportionately hurt by the cuts.

### **Commercialization**

Commercialization of our publicly-funded schools is on the rise, as the funding formula increasingly starves school boards into so-called “partnerships” with business. Corporations are sponsoring programs, school teams and even curriculum materials. Some schools are handing out free magazines to the students - full of ads. Promotional materials for students or materials for schools and teachers may be provided to gain publicity for the donating company.

Exclusive deals may be reached with soft drink vendors or even a pizza chain. *Coke* and *Pepsi* vending machines are now commonplace in Ontario schools. Cash strapped schools can bring in \$10-15,000 a year in revenues by helping the soft drink giants create brand loyalty in the province’s teenagers. “Cola wars” have erupted as the two giants vie for exclusive contracts. The Ottawa/Carleton school board provides a typical example, with 60 - 70% of its schools involved with soft drink machines or other kinds of advertising.

Corporations are naming schools or parts of schools and *Wal-Mart* has gone so far as to publicly “adopt” schools. Private school management companies have provided services to essentially manage publicly-funded schools, and just as soft drink vendors strike exclusive deals with schools, so, too, do large computer companies to meet the networking and administrative needs of school boards. Partnerships of various forms have emerged, which pair private and public dollars to fund capital or other projects, and “learning foundations” have emerged as a way for school boards to raise revenue. Students are also being subjected to more and more “brand” products and are increasingly the target of market researchers.



This commercialization, fueled by corporate interests in a largely untapped education market and government under-funding, takes other forms as well. Some school boards have relaxed rules on in-school advertising, and given directors and principals authority to make such decisions. Students are a captive audience while at school, and corporations are willing to pay well for in-school advertisements, promotional materials, partnerships and sponsorships, as part of their “cradle to grave” marketing schemes. Marketing research proves the importance of brand recognition and developing life long consumers at an early age. Cash strapped schools are becoming an easier target for brand name promotions and ads. The shortage of curriculum materials, given the rapid pace of change, is another venue which corporations pursue. The *National Post*, for example, has a free “Business Studies Kit” for high school students. Companies such as *Exxon*, *Proctor & Gamble*, *Coke*, *VISA* and *MasterCard*, to name just a few, all produce curriculum materials.

Electronic equipment is being supplied through companies such as the *Youth News Network* (YNN), which gets high schools to sign contracts for free equipment in exchange for mandatory viewing of its “news” programming and commercials. YNN has been the subject of much media attention in Ontario over the past couple of years, as parents, teachers, students and media educators united to fight its introduction into Meadowvale Secondary School in Peel. Six Canadian provinces and territories banned YNN, but the Ontario government refused to do so. As a result of the battle in Peel region, several people who publicly criticized YNN were sued by its parent corporation.

All of these encroachments on the publicly-funded education system have a number of effects on the education students receive. Some are more invasive than others, but they all have a common thread - the assumption that private interests have an important role to play in the education of our children.

### **The Effects on Post-Secondary Education**

Since the Tories came to power in 1995, university operating grants per student, adjusted per inflation, have declined by 18%. At the same time, tuition fees have gone steadily upward, resulting in a major barrier to access to higher education for many potential students. In the colleges, the proportion of funds generated from tuition has increased from 13.7% in 1993 to 20.7% in 1997, while overall revenue has declined. Colleges have reduced their expenditures to stay within the shrinking envelope of funding. Operating spending declined from \$378.4 million in 1994-95 to \$342.1 million in 1996-97.

*“Our members (teaching assistants) are students and workers at the same time. We spend six to nine months bargaining to get a wage increase, then tuition goes up more. The gains we make at the bargaining table are eroded as fast as we get them... Our membership has increased from 770 members in 1998 to 950 in 1999, but their gross income went down to \$5 million from \$6 million. Their work is being subdivided and there is more job sharing.”*

*- Giorgio, teaching assistant from the University of Guelph*

### **Workload**

The decline in expenditures by community colleges has been achieved through savings in the wages and salaries paid to academic and support staff - mainly through reductions in their numbers and downloading of the work. The number of full-time faculty has decreased, while partial load and part-time work has increased. At the same time, the number of students enrolled in community colleges across the province has increased.

Class sizes have increased throughout the system. A recent HRDC-sponsored study shows that the student to faculty ratio in Ontario's community colleges has increased by 32% from 19 students per professor in 1995 to 25 students per professor in 2000.

A survey conducted by York University's Centre For Research on Work and Society asked college faculty about class size, and 78% of respondents reported an increase in class size over the past five years. More than 2/3 said they had more students to teach, and 56.5% reported a decrease in contact time with students outside the classroom.

Workload has become a major issue. When the above-mentioned survey asked faculty if their workload had changed over the past five years, 88% reported an increase in their workload over an average workweek. More than 78% of faculty noted that their level of stress had also increased.

*"A hundred students are assigned to one TA (teaching assistant), with only two hours for office work a week. Students who are failing can't get help, because no one has the time. The TA workload has increased, and so has the student drop out rate. May 7-8% of the students don't need help; the rest need help but don't get it. It's the same problem at the colleges."*

*- David, graduate student from Carleton University*

Throughout the system, work is also being downloaded from faculty to non-faculty staff. In the universities, work is being transferred to non-sessionals, while in the colleges, work is being downloaded to the sessionals, who earn \$15 versus the \$45 per hour paid to full-time faculty. In the survey of college faculty, almost 81% of respondents reported that this practice had negatively affected the quality of education offered at their college.

Things will get worse over the next five years, as the double cohort of students enters the post-secondary system in 2003. Carleton University is a typical example of what universities across the province are facing. The university needs more money to hire professors. Instead, they are trying to eliminate the cap on the number of sessionals that can be hired (for less money) for three years as a band-aid solution, and use graduate students as sessionals.

In the meantime, they are currently hiring "instructors" to teach, who fall between sessionals and professors (have no tenure but get paid more than sessionals).

With the number of students up and funding to post-secondary institutions down, colleges and universities are forced to make cuts. The government's focus on "the classroom" usually translates into the short end of the stick for support workers. George Brown College in Toronto, for example, laid off 140 workers in one day, with about half of them coming from the support staff. At Queen's University, the senior administration plays one group off against the other. They settle collective agreements with the faculty association and then tell the other employees they have no more money because of the faculty settlement. The other

workers feel they're undervalued, and end up getting less money and benefits. CUPE members working in the library at Queen's, and as technicals and custodians, for example, have experienced increased downsizing and re-organization to the point where there is no longer adequate staff to do jobs.

*"Our members are preparing to negotiate and campaign with our allies to ensure that all new buildings on Ontario campuses are maintained and staffed by union members protected by union contracts."*  
- Kirk, CUPE member at Guelph University

### **Privatization, Contracting Out, and Closure**

Privatization and contracting out in the post-secondary sector are even more common than in the elementary and secondary systems. The less important the job is to students, the more likely those workers will get laid off. Print shops, bookstores, and support staff are all experiencing lay-offs or contracting out. The results are often unsatisfactory. The University of Windsor, for example, contracted out the summer clean-up of their residence. Supplies went missing and the regular staff had to re-do the job afterwards. They also contracted out their food services to Marriott, and then reversed it, and now it's done internally. If the recommendations of the government's *Investing in Students Task Force* report to move to local bargaining in the college system is implemented, support workers there will be affected by even more contracting out.

*"The present government's tenure with respect to its 25 community colleges is one that is distinguished by a failure to recognize the distinct value, both educationally and economically, of the Ontario college system, a failure to provide*

*sufficient funds to maintain quality education and training in the college classrooms, a failure to sustain Northern and smaller colleges from the threat of closure, and a failure to provide adequate funding for the double cohort year, 2003. The effect has been crowded classrooms, half of the colleges in deficit financing, and a very insecure future both for those faculty and staff in the college system trying to do "more with less" and for those thousands of students who depend on a healthy, viable college system to provide their education and training needs."*  
- Dean, professor at Canadore College

The Harris Tories are promoting, if not forcing, "partnerships" between public institutions and private industry through its \$20 billion super-build growth fund. The purpose of the fund is to find funding partners to finance the building of hospitals, schools, highways, long-term care facilities and virtually anything else to do with infrastructure of the province. This is having a tremendous impact at the post secondary level. The province is essentially offering 50% funding, a total of \$700 million, to colleges and universities to build facilities. The catch is, the college or university must find private partners to pay the matching 50%.

Super-build and other "partnerships" being pushed by the Tories raise the issue of accountability. Since businesses exist to make profits, they have expectations in return for such large investments. The new facilities will teach overwhelmingly high technology so students can go straight into jobs industry wants to fill. With a concentration of private investment, decision making becomes more concentrated on private interests.

In Kingston, Queen's University has privatized some of its departments that dovetail best with the private sector. At the same time, they are letting arts and history faculty leave. At Carleton University, *Coke* provides the money for three \$2,000 scholarships, and in return gets exclusive rights on campus. "Matching funds" partnerships are also impacting on academic integrity. They have forced researchers to seek funding from industry to qualify for government money and are leading to the commercialization of research. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this is the case of Apotex and University of Toronto researcher, Nancy Olivieri in 1999. Olivieri was prevented from publishing research critical of the company's new drug, and when she went public, was not supported by the university. Critics believe the university kept silent because they wanted to leverage \$20 - \$50 million from the drug company.

When corporations enter into contracts with colleges or universities, the democratic rights of students may also be limited as a result. For example, the University of Kentucky signed a five-year, \$25 million sponsorship deal with *Nike* containing a clause that allows the company to terminate the contract if the university disparages the brand or takes any other action inconsistent with the endorsement of *Nike* products. Here in Ontario, anti-tobacco activists, many of them students, were barred from handing out leaflets critical of the tobacco industry on York University's campus while it was host to the *du Maurier Tennis Open* in 1996. When the activists defied the prohibition, the university called in the police, who seized their pamphlets, ticketed them and threatened to arrest them.

The freedom of speech issue was also brought to a head by Jim Keady, a soccer coach at St John's, who no longer has a teaching or coaching job as a result of his campaign against *Nike*. While Keady was doing graduate work, a professor suggested that he explore the connection between moral theology and sports in a class on catholic social teaching. Keady studied *Nike's* labour practices and ended up initiating a debate on the issue on the internet, at the same time as St. John's was negotiating a deal with *Nike*. As a coach, Keady would have had to sport the *Nike* apparel - something he was unwilling to do in light of his research. He was given the choice of wearing the clothes and dropping the issue or resigning.

Perhaps the most frightening future facing post-secondary institutions in Ontario is the prospect of closures. In its drive to "rationalize" the post-secondary education system, the Harris Tories are moving towards shutting down institutions, especially those that serve marginalized, or remote and northern communities.

The recent decision to close Toronto's Collège des Grands Lacs should serve as a chilling warning to other universities and community colleges. This college was created to serve the large Francophone population in the Greater Toronto Area and Southwestern Ontario. Over time, the programs and staffing in this institution have been steadily whittled away.

On October 4, 2001, the college's Board of Governors voted, without a quorum, to close the college, effective immediately. Working hand-in-hand with the government, the Board proposes to transfer the college's remaining programs and students to Sudbury's Collège Boréal. It remains to be seen how many students will be able to uproot their lives and move to Sudbury to continue their education.

Julie, a community college local president from Welland, notes that "there is still a very strong demand for French educational services in this region." The brutal decision to shut the college's doors means that French-speaking students in Southwestern Ontario and the GTA have lost access to college education in their own language. The impact will be especially harsh for new immigrants and those lacking the resources to relocate to northern Ontario.

### **Students**

In the colleges, the business model of governance prevails, with its emphasis on greater efficiency and fewer staff, and evaluation according to productivity. Those who succeed are rewarded with more money. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are used as the basis for funding in the community colleges. The problem with the KPI's is that they don't show what the school is doing for the student, only where the students get jobs. Those colleges with lower KPI's get less money. The result will be that colleges will increasingly get rid of the lower rated programs, and run only those programs that make money for them. Students will have to travel to other cities to get the programs they want.

*“They just closed five programs – robotics, process control, drafting, civil engineering, and electronics engineering. In the latter case, the reason was that the equipment costs too much, even though there is a high demand for jobs in that field. Because the KPI’s compare colleges to each other, it makes it tough for the northern colleges in low employment areas like Nipissing. It forces kids to move away to get their education as well as jobs.”*

*- Bob, support services officer at Canadore College*

The use of student-based enrollment as the funding unit has always hurt the smaller, northern colleges. But now with the amount per student decreased to \$2,800 per student from \$7,000, everything is being downloaded onto the students. In addition to sky rocketing tuition, there are the additional costs of user fees and equipment. In the north, students often have to add room and board as well, when they are unable to study in their own community due to local institutions losing programs or closing outright.

Access has become a major problem in the post-secondary system. Student poverty is increasing as tuition fees have increased, especially in professional schools where fees have been deregulated. Fees for medical school range from \$6,000 in Ottawa to over \$14,000 at the U of T. The problem is so extreme that the OMA is now complaining that unless medical school fees are reduced, the province will experience a grave doctor shortage. In law schools, student fees range from \$4,000 in Ottawa to \$12,000 at the University of Toronto, yet the maximum student loan is \$4,500. In the colleges, the cost of apprenticeship programs has increased to as much as \$9,000 for some courses. Sheridan College now charges \$12,000 for its animation program.

In addition to hefty tuition fees, ancillary fees are also increasing. Some post-secondary institutions are charging as much as \$250 per semester in extra fees, and \$1,000 in science courses. Mohawk College increased its fees for materials to \$60, and its technology fee to \$50. For some technical programs offered by Ontario’s colleges the ancillary fees can actually reach the same level as students’ overall tuition. Nipissing University instituted a mandatory lap top initiative in some of its courses, whereby students are being forced to pay out \$1,600 in rental fees for a lap top computer for one year, and another \$1,200 to keep it.

Student debt has increased dramatically, especially since the 1995 deregulation. Student loan programs haven’t kept pace with the increases in tuition, and many students are relying on food banks to get by. Students who attend Ontario’s Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology are often forced to seek part-time work to pay for their fees and living costs. As more and more hours of paid work are required to cover their costs, fewer hours are available for study. The result is an increasing rate of student failure in the college system.

From 1996/97 to 1999/00 the total amount of student aid provided by the federal and Ontario governments dropped by almost \$500 million while the number of students receiving student aid decreased by 15%. The average debt load for a 4-year BA graduate receiving OSAP was \$20,500 in 1998/99. The average for a 2-year college graduate was over \$12,000 and for a 3-year diploma graduate was \$17,000.

Spiraling fees and the specter of crushing student debt may serve to discourage women, especially single mothers, as well as minorities and working-class students.

Returning students are being excluded by stringent preparatory courses with high costs. The elimination of the qualifying year between OAC and university, which acted as a bridge for those returning to school without enough credits, has also reduced accessibility. In addition, changes to the *Day Nurseries Act* in May 2001 have limited access to those under *Ontario Works*. Previously, full childcare subsidies were available for those returning to school, but now the only reimbursement is for classroom time only.

*“In my class (at Queen’s University) only three of ninety-five students last year were non-white. Queen’s University is becoming a homogeneous student community.”*  
- Hart, professor at Queen’s University

## **Our Vision of Publicly-Funded Education**

Our vision includes an education system that is universally accessible and publicly funded. A quality, universally accessible, publicly-funded education system is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Private schools should not be supported by public dollars, and charter schools and voucher programs have no place in the publicly-funded system.

The public system should be better funded at the elementary, secondary, continuing and adult education, and post-secondary levels. There should be no contracting out of services, and no commercial influence or private control in education. User fees for school programs and materials should be eliminated, and tuition fees at the post-secondary level should be rolled back and eventually eliminated. Adult education should be adequately funded and accessible to everyone.

Every student in every Ontario classroom has a right to qualified, certified teachers who have access to adequate professional development and resources. All students have a right to quality programs and curricula that reflect the contributions made by all groups in Canadian society, and reflect an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and anti-violence philosophy.

Students, teachers, and other education workers have a right to study and work in schools that are safe and healthy, and free from harassment due to gender, race, religion, ability, or sexual orientation. All education workers have a right to have all terms and conditions of employment negotiated through direct and free collective bargaining with their employer.

All governing bodies in the publically funded education system (school boards, and college and university boards of governors) should include worker representation. School boards should provide adequate pay for democratically elected and accountable trustees.

The regulatory control of Queen’s Park, should be minimized, and shared decision-making on educational policy should be reinstated so that workers, students and their programs are protected.

## **Action Plan**

- 1. The OFL will support an on-going role for the *Education Is A Right Task Force*.**
- 2. The OFL and its affiliates will work with the NDP in the house by providing information on education, and will lobby the Liberals to adopt our education agenda.**
- 3. The OFL and its affiliates will continue to work with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), and other education partners.**
- 4. The OFL will support, in whatever way possible, campaigns by affiliates and allies in the education sector, including using OFL Solidarity Networks to get private and public sector support for education workers' bargaining and work actions.**
- 5. The OFL, in conjunction with its affiliates and its allies in the education sector, will launch a campaign on education issues, which would run from 2002 to the next provincial election. The ultimate goal of this campaign will be to defeat the Tories in the next election, and will consist of two phases:**

**PHASE 1 - to educate our members, both within and outside of the education system, as to the destructive effects of the policies of the Harris Tories on our publicly-funded education system, and what that means for working families, their children, and society as a whole; and**

**PHASE 2 - to mobilize our members to participate in campaigns on education issues, and to work to defeat the Tory government in the next provincial election.**

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